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#page #left #toolkit_menu { background:url('/images/toolkit/bg-h3-the11.gif') 16px 0  
no-repeat; }
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For centuries, humankind has been fascinated with the harsh winds, vast frigid waters, and landscapes built of ice and snow in the polar/subpolar ecoregion. The extreme climate and unique landscape have attracted explorers seeking adventure and compelled people to create new methods to live in these inhospitable conditions. The region is a complex ecosystem composed of the vast, deep, ice-covered Arctic Ocean, surrounded by the continental land masses that include Alaska, Northern Canada, and Eurasia. Encompassing a range of landscapes from mountains and glaciers, to flat plains and wetlands, the Arctic landscape is shaped by temperature and the processes of freezing and thawing. This landscape provides a variety of habitat types for the many plant and animal species that call the region home.

Due to the role that the ice and cold climate of the Arctic landscape play in regulating water levels and salinity in oceans around the world, the region is closely linked to a variety of different ecosystems. While the Arctic is considered one integrated system, three specific ecosystems are often identified within it: terrestrial, freshwater, and marine. Throughout these three systems, the cold climate, rather than their geological history, is the principal factor that gives them their distinct characters.

## Downloads

- [Case Study: Polar and Subpolar Regions](#)
- [Activity - Impact of a Changing Climate on the Pacific Walrus](#)